

# Losing Sleep Over Insomnia



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If you've ever experienced the frustration of listening to the clock tick while you toss and turn waiting for the sweet release of sleep, you'll know only too well how debilitating insomnia can be. Sleep disorders are uncommonly common, with over one third of people experiencing insomnia from time to time. Only around five per cent however, will need treatment for the condition.

The concept of "a good sleep" differs widely from person to person. While the average night's sleep for an adult is around eight hours, some people only need five, while others like up to 10 hours or more. What seems like insomnia to one person might be considered a good sleep by another.

People who suffer from insomnia are normally frustrated by it. Ironically, this emotional state aggravates the situation, starting a vicious cycle. It helps to stop expecting a set amount of sleep every night. Having less sleep than you'd like doesn't cause any harm. Allow yourself to fall short of the ideal without getting anxious about it.

## **Understanding Insomnia**

"<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/insomnia-symptoms-and-causes>" Insomnia is a "<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/default.htm>" sleep disorder characterized by difficulty falling or staying asleep.

People with insomnia have one or more of the following symptoms:

Difficulty falling asleep

Waking up often during the night and having trouble going back to sleep

Waking up too early in the morning

Feeling tired upon waking

## **The Tibb view on Insomnia**

Tibb identifies insomnia as a result of too much dryness in the body. Generally, people who are medium to small framed, or those who have a tendency to worry, and are highly analytical (The Melancholic Temperament), may be more predisposed to Insomnia, but it can affect any person whose homeostasis or immune system has been compromised.

Dry weather and environment, spicy foods, excess proteins and a stressful life all increase dryness and are often factors that contribute to poor sleep conditions. Understanding the reasons behind a person's insomnia is vital for long-term good health, as ironically, sleep is essential for restoring moisture within the body.

Insomnia varies in how long it lasts and how often it occurs. It can be short-term (acute insomnia) or can last a long time (chronic insomnia). Acute insomnia can last from one night to a few weeks. Insomnia is considered chronic when a person has insomnia at least three nights a week for a month or longer. Persistent Insomnia may need assistance from a medical practitioner.

## Causes of Insomnia

There are many causes of insomnia that need to be considered. These include:

### Acute:

Significant ["http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/"](http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/) stress, job loss, death of a loved one, ["http://children.webmd.com/kids-coping-divorce"](http://children.webmd.com/kids-coping-divorce) divorce, moving, illness.

### Emotional or physical discomfort.

Environmental factors like noise, light, or extreme temperatures

Medications such as those used to treat colds, ["http://www.webmd.com/allergies/default.htm"](http://www.webmd.com/allergies/default.htm) allergies, depression,

["http://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/default.htm"](http://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/default.htm) high blood pressure, and asthma.

Interferences in normal sleep schedule- jet lag or working conditions

### Chronic insomnia:

Depression and ["http://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/default.htm"](http://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/default.htm) anxiety.

Chronic use of drugs or alcohol

Sleep Apnoea and cardiac disorders

Other illness conditions such as Restless Legs Syndrome

Chronic stress.

Pain or discomfort at night.

## Treatment

Acute insomnia may not require treatment. Mild insomnia can often be prevented or cured by practicing good sleep habits. If insomnia makes it difficult for a person to function, healthcare providers may prescribe medication for a limited time. Tibb doctors recommend herbal medication, as well as lifestyle changes, massage and breathing exercises. Avoid using over-the-counter sleeping pills since they may have undesired side-effects and tend to lose their effectiveness over time.

## Tips for Beating Insomnia

Good Sleep habits can help you get a good night's sleep for acute and mild insomnia.

Try to go to bed at the same time each night and wake at the same time each morning.

Try not to nap during the day.

Avoid ["http://www.webmd.com/balance/caffeine-myths-and-facts"](http://www.webmd.com/balance/caffeine-myths-and-facts) caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol, especially at night.

These stimulants keep you from falling asleep.

Get regular ["http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/guide/default.htm"](http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/guide/default.htm) exercise, but not just before bedtime

Don't eat a heavy meal after 7pm. A light snack before bedtime however, may help you sleep.

Make your bedroom comfortable. Be sure that it is dark, quiet, and not too warm or too cold.

Follow a routine to help you relax. Read a book, listen to music, or take a bath.

If you find yourself lying awake ["http://www.webmd.com/balance/how-worrying-affects-your-body"](http://www.webmd.com/balance/how-worrying-affects-your-body) worrying about things, try making a to-do list before you go to bed.

Eat bananas, figs, dates, yoghurt, milk, whole grain, grapefruit and almonds.

Meditate and practice breathing and relaxation exercises

Regular massage is recommended. Aromatherapy oils that are useful include lavender and chamomile. Tibb doctors also use sesame oil rubbed on the soles of the feet.

## Recipes for calming drinks:

Soak 11 Almonds, 2 tsp Poppy Seeds and 2 Cardomom Pods in 100ml water for 6-7 hours. Liquidise with 150ml boiled and cooled milk, add a pinch of nutmeg, sugar or honey to taste. Drink half an hour before bedtime. Chamomile Tea with Honey is recommended for its calming effect.

## Things to remember

Insomnia is a symptom, not a disease. The cause needs to be identified and corrected.

Long-term chronic insomnia needs professional support and a lot of patience.

With correct support, you don't need to lie awake worrying about not being able to fall asleep.